

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 09129 061803Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

S E C R E T CAIRO 9129

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, LE

SUBJ: FAHMY ON LEBANON

REF: CAIRO 9019

1. SUMMARY: FAHMY SOMEWAHT LESS OPTIMISTIC THAN BEFORE ABOUT SYRIAN WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW FROM LEBANON. SHOULD THEY GET OUT NOW, HE BELIEVES ASAD'S SYSTEM AT HOME WOULD COLLAPSE. HE WAS SLIGHTLY HOPEFUL ABOUT SOFAR MEETING, BUT DOES NOT HAVE GREAT CONFIDENCE IN MAHMUD RIAD. GOE ATTEMPTING, THROUGH SAUDIS AND KUWAITIS, TO PERSUADE SYRIANS AND MARONITES TO ATTEND A QUADRIPARTITE FONMINS' MEETING IN JIDDA OR RIYADH. LEADERS OF ALL LEBANESE FACTIONS WOULD ALSO BE INVITED. SUCH A MEETING WOULD, IN EGYPTIAN VIEW, STRENGTHEN CEASE-FIRE AND ENCOURAGE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE CONCEPT. THE TWO MUST PROCEED IN PARALLEL. KHADDAM HAD ADMITTED SYRIANS IMPRESSED WITH "NEW LEADERSHIP" OF ABU IYAD AND ABU JIHAD. ABU IYAD DETERMINED CONTINUE HIS FIGHT WITH SYRIANS AND MARONITES. PALESTINIAN REACTION TO FALL OF TEL ZA'ATAR WILL BE FELT NOT ONLY IN LEBANON, BUT ELSEWHERE AS WELL. KUWAITI FONMIN HAD ACKNOWLEDGED KUWAIT WILL BE NEXT.

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SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 09129 061803Z

LIBYA AND IRAQ WILL FINANCE SUCH PLO OPERATIONS AND

PALESTINIANS WILL CONTINUE GET UNLIMITED ARMS. FAHMY INSISTED NO SOVIET ARMS ARE GOING THROUGH EGYPT FOR PALESTINIANS, ALTHOUGH EGYPTIANS HAD AGREED TO ARAFAT'S REQUEST TO ALLOW SOVIET SPARE PARTS TO TRANSIT. EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT PLACED SOVIETS IN EMBARRASSING POSITION, AND THEY HAVE NOT SENT ANY SUCH SPARE PARTS THROUGH EGYPT. HOWEVER, ARMS COMING INTO LEBANON FROM IRAQ AND FROM LIBYA AND PERHAPS ALGERIA. END SUMMARY

2. WHEN WITH FAHMY IN ALEXANDRIA, JULY 5, I ASKED FOR HIS ASSESSMENT CURRENT LEBANESE SITUATION. HE WAS SOMEWHAT LESS OPTIMISTIC THAN WHEN I LAST SAW HIM. THE SYRIANS, HE SAID, ARE DETERMINED TO STAY IN LEBANON. THEY ARE "NOT HONEST" IN WHAT THEY TOLD AL SESSION. PROBLEM WILL BE TO GET THE SYRIANS TO RECOGNIZE THEY MUST WITHDRAW. HE REMAINS CONVINCED THEY WOULD LIKE TO GET OUT, BUT CANNOT DO SO NOW. THE SYSTEM AT HOME WOULD COLLAPSE. ASAD NEEDS SOME BENEFITS FROM HIS COSTLY LEBANESE ADVENTURE. NOR DOES SARG WANT A HOSTILE REGIME ON ITS BORDERS. IRONICALLLY, HOWEVER, "EVERY LEBANESE" WILL REMEMBER WHAT THE SYRIANS HAVE DONE. RESIDUAL LEBANESE AFFECTION FOR SYRIA WILL BE LOW.

3. FAHMY HAD HAD NOT DIRECT REPORTS FROM ALSYG MAHMOUD RIAD'S SPECIAL MISSION. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT RIAD HAD MADE AN OPTIMISTIC STATEMENT THE PREVIOUS EVENING UPON THE LATTER'S RETURN TO DAMASCUS AND THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS FACTIONS WERE MEETING AT SOFAR. YASIR ARAFAT ALSO IN SAFAR. RIAD'S EFFORTS WOULD PRESUMABLY CONTINUE, ALTHOUGH FAHMY HAS LITTLE CONFIDENCE RIAD WILL GET VERY FAR.

4. FAHMY THEN SAID GOE IS ATTEMPTING, THROUGH THE SAUDIS AND KUWAITIS, TO PERSUADE THE SYRIANS TO ATTEND A QUADRIpartite FONMINS' MEETING IN JIDDA OR RIYADH. LEADERS OF ALL THE LEBANESE FACTIONS WOULD ALSO BE INVITED TO THAT MEETING. EGYPTIANS HAD GIVEN THE SAUDIS A "PLAN" TO THIS EFFECT. SAUDIS ARE NOW DISCUSSING IT WITH THE KUWAITIS AND SYRIANS. THROUGH SAUDIS AND SYRIANS, EGYPTIANS ARE TRYING TO PERSUADE MARONITE LEADERS TO ATTEND.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 CAIRO 09129 061803Z

5. SUCH A MEETING, AS GOE ENVISAGES IT, WILL STRENGTHEN A CEASE-FIRE AND ENCOURAGE THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE CONCEPT. THE TWO, HE INSISTED, MUST NOT BE HANDLED SEQUENTIALLY, BUT SHOULD GO FORWARD TOGETHER IN PARALLEL.

6. RE PLO KHADDAM HAD THREE TIMES ADMITTED AT THE AL SESSION THAT SYRIANS NEVER EXPECTED THE PLO TO BE AS STRONG,

WELL ARMED AND EFFECTIVELY LED AS IT WAS. KHADDAM HAD SPECIFICALLY PRAISED THE "NEW LEADERSHIP" OF AL FATAH, NAMELY, ABU IYAD AND ABU JIHAD. ABY IYAD, IN FAHMY'S VIEW, IS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE HIS FIGHT WITH THE SYRIANS AND MARONITES. IF THE SYRIAN-ENCOURAGED CHRISTIAN ATTACK ON TLE ZA'ATAR SUCCEEDS, THE REPERCUSSIONS WILL BE FELT NOT ONLY IN LEBANON, BUT IN OTHER ARAB STATES AS WELL. KUWAIT WILL BE NEXT AND THE KUWAITI FOMIN HAD ACKNOWLEDGED THIS TO FAHMY AT THE RECENT AL SESSION. THE LIBYANS AND IRAQIS WILL FINANCE SUCH PLO OPERATIONS. THE PALESTINIANS WILL CONTINUE TO GET UNLIMITED QUANTITIES OF ARMS.

7. ASKED IF THESE ARMS WERE COMING THROUGH EGYPT, FAHMY SAID THEY ARE NOT. WHEN I MENTIONED THE PRESIDENT'S STATMENT TO ME ABOUT AGREEMENT TO PERMIT SOVIET ARMS TO GO THROUGH EGYPT, FAHMY SAID THIS HAD TO BE CORRECTED. IN RESPONSE YASIR ARAFAT'S REQUEST, SOVIETS AGREED SEND SPARE PARTS FOR PALESTINIAN EQUIPMENT. ARAFAT ASKED THAT THESE BE SENT THROUGH EGYPT AND GOE HAD AGREED SO LONG AS THEY ARE SPARE PARTS. UP TO NOW, HOWEVER, SOVIETS HAVE SENT NOTHING THROUGH EGYPT. SOVIETS, FAHMY OPINED, DO NOT WISH TO SEND EQUIPMENT HERE. IT WOULD EMBARRASS THEM SINCE THEY SEND NOTHING TO THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY. BY ACCEPTING ARAFAT'S REQUEST, FAHMY CLAIMED, GOE HAS PUT THE SOVIETS IN A CORNER. ARMS ARE COMING INTO LEBANON FROM IRAG, HOWEVER, AND HE THOUGHT FROM LIBYA AND PERHAPS ALGERIA AS WELL.
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